

Amendments to the Specification

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 4, line 1, with the following:

In addition to the hardware configuration, a software architecture may allow the control card or plane and the line card or forwarding plane to communicate and coordinate their efforts with respect to various protocols. An example of such an architecture is a distributed control plane architecture (DCPA) ~~is that found discussed~~ in copending US Patent Application Serial No. ~~10/xxx,xxx, (attorney docket no. 5038-335)~~ 10/713,237, filed simultaneously with the instant application. This is just one example of such a mechanism, but may promote ease of understanding of the invention.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6, line 18, with the following

A mechanism that allows this offloading to function is one such as the DCPA mentioned earlier. The mechanism would allow the control card and line cards to discover and communicate with each other about their distributed tasks. An embodiment of a method of preparing a line card for distributed link management is shown in Figure 4. The line card is initialized at 60. The offloaded portion of the link management registers with the software mechanism that provides transparent communication and control of the distribution at 62. An example of the software mechanism is the distributed control plane architecture (DCPA) discussed in copending US Patent Application Serial No. 10/713,237. If the control card is not registered at 64, the line cards wait until it is. A control connection is set up between the control card and the line card at 66. The line card transmits data about its resources at 68, such as the physical links it controls or to which it has access, interfaces available on the line card, and processing resources available, as examples. The control card then configures the line card with

the link configuration information at 70, including information about data link aggregation into traffic channels.